

Doctor *T R A P P*

Vindicated from the

I M P U T A T I O N

OF BEING

A CHRISTIAN.

Occasioned by a

Pamphlet of that REVEREND AUTHOR
against the METHODISTS,

INTITLED,

The Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger of being
RIGHTEOUS OVER-MUCH,

By a LOVER OF TRUTH.

*Seest thou a Man that is hasty in his Words? There
is more hope of a Fool, than of him. Prov. xxix. 20.*

L O N D O N,

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Doctor *T R A P P*

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I M P U T A T I O N

OF BEING

A CHRISTIAN.

I DO not undertake this Defence of the Doctor, with a View of clearing him from the false Asperſion of Chriſtianity, to ſuch as are acquainted with his Writings. But as the laſt Production of this complaiſant Author againſt being *Righteous over-much*, has given occaſion to that weak Set of People, who pride themſelves in being Chriſtians and making others ſo, falſely to inſinuate that the Doctor is in a fair Way to become a Proſelyte of theirs; I thought it neceſſary to engage in his Defence, as well to do Juſtice to the Character of an injured Man, as to remove any Prejudice ſo falſe a Report might have on the Minds of Perſons, who are perhaps no more inclined than himſelf

at present to be *Righteous over-much*.

I am not so uncharitable to accuse Christians of Malice with regard to this Writer. They look upon the Title of Christian as the greatest Praise they can lavish on Merit; and therefore may probably think it no Scandal to call a Man a Christian, or say that he is christianly inclined, even at the very time he is labouring to prove himself otherwise. For tho' they cannot help seeing that his Drift is to subvert their Principles; as they take the Forgiveness of their Enemies to be a Duty of Christianity, the Injury they do the Doctor may proceed from mistaken Charity. But begging their Pardon, I cannot help being of the mind of a late eminent Man, that *false Praise is the severest Censure*. Wherefore granting, for the present, the Title of Christian to be an Encomium, and bestow'd in this Case from a Principle of Brotherly Forgiveness, and to do good for evil; it is nevertheless a severe Censure and Aspersion on the Doctor, whose very last Production proves him not in the least christianly affected. And consequently if they keep up to their own odd Doctrine of *Perfection*, they must be obliged to retract a Title so unjustly bestow'd, however well meant.

That my Justification of him may not lose any Part of its Weight from a Suspicion of Prejudice in his Favour, I shall examin impartially into his real Sentiments as they are to be discover'd in the Pamphlet abovemention'd; intitled, *The Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger of*

of being *Righteous over-much*, &c. without flinging or palliating whatever I may there find to favour of Christianity. And if any Paragraph throughout that matchless Piece which is wrested to prove him either a Christian, or at least Christianly affected, will not admit of a favorable Interpretation to the contrary; I will give him up. But if upon the whole it shou'd appear that his main Design in That Work is to sap the Foundation of Christianity, and that the few dubious Expressions, by which he seems to favour it, are only the little overflowings of that Complaisance with which every judicious Writer, like ours, endeavours to tickle the Ears and steal upon the Minds of the prejudiced Part of his Readers; I hope the Christians will lay aside their vain Expectations of seeing him one Day a Convert to their Party, and make him Restitution of the Character they rob him of, by stigmatizing him with the Title of Christian.

To come then to the Point, the Doctor takes his Text from *Ecclesiastes* vii. 16. *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Upon which he very judiciously enquires, whether it is possible or not to be *too good*, especially in these times, *when all Manner of Vice and Wickedness abounds to a degree almost unheard of?* From so warm a Description of the Wickedness of the Age, Some, for want of knowing the Doctor, might expect to hear him say, that *we cannot be too good*; and that.

that, as every Evil is to be cured by its opposite, nothing less than the utmost Perfection of Goodness can be requisite to make head against the universal Corruption of a most wicked Age. But our prudent Author knows better Things than to fall immediately from his Text, and *destroy himself* in the Favour of the Public, by opposing, to publick Corruption, *Over-righteousness*. No. A Man who will swim in a Torrent, must swim with the Stream, if he means to keep his Head above Water. And one who loves, and is resolved to wallow in the Pleasures of Life must approve them in others; or sink into Disappointment, and *destroy himself*, if he is so *Righteous over-much* as not to do it. Now this the Doctor says is down-right Wickedness, if it be with Design. *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself? To be more righteous than the rest* of our Neighbours, is to *destroy ourselves* in their Favour, by reproaching them with their irregular Lives. This therefore the Doctor will have to be a Crime, and since he will, who can contradict him, with whom, *stat pro ratione Voluntas*, Will supplies the Place of Reason? Is not Self-preservation a Duty? Self-destruction then must be a Breach of it, consequently a Crime.

However as my Author wisely remarks, if we are *too good* without designing to be so, it is Folly, and even then is of very dangerous Tendency: And who can doubt it, since, whether we mean it or not, we shall equally *destroy*

stroy ourselves, by attempting to stem the Torrent, we ought to swim with, of universal Corruption. And that being thus *righteous over-much* is a *Folly*, you have no less an Authority than our Author's own Word for it: Mark how he proves it.

Our *English Bible*, to dissuade us from being *Righteous over-much*, adds, *why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Our first Protestant Interpreters indeed tell us in the Margin that the *Hebrew* has it: *Why shouldst thou be desolate?* But he, more versed in *Hebrew* than Any-body else, has found another Version, *why shouldst thou stupify, besot or infatuate thyself?* So that you have the Doctor's Word for two Things: First, that being *too good* is *Folly*, when it is not Wickedness; secondly, that the Doctor understands *Hebrew* his own Way. And how much this Interpretation is to his Purpose against Christianity, will appear from his Manner of treating his Subject. Let us follow him then in his Division.

I. The first Thing he undertakes to shew is, What we may reasonably understand, by being *Righteous over-much*, and *over-wise*.

And lest from his Explanation of this any shou'd mistake him for a Christian, he takes Care to exclude all Interpretations put upon this Text by any such as have been suspected to be tainted with Christianity, however natural such Interpretations may seem. " In short, to be
" *Righ-*

“ *Righteous over-much* is (with him) to place
 “ much Religion in *Extraordinaries*, in new
 “ *Inventions*, and striking out into *Bye-paths*.”
 Wou’d a Man infected with Christianity have
 said thus much? Christians indeed of every
 Denomination exclaim against *New Inventions*
 as opposite to the Old Doctrine of *Christ*, and
 therefore the latest Sects among them as much
 deny their Alterations to be Innovations, as the
 Church of *Rome*, which is the most ancient of
 all Pretenders to Christianity, denies her Do-
 ctrines to be of latter Invention. Yet they all
 look upon *Extraordinaries*, as the Doctor terms
 them, to be the Perfection of Christianity:
 Such as *extraordinary* Self-Denial, Humilia-
 tion, Poverty for *Christ*’s Sake, voluntary Ma-
 ceration of the Body, &c. And as *Christ* has
 declared the broad and high Road of Life to
 be the Way to Perdition, they deem it abso-
 lutely necessary to strike into *Bye-paths*, tho’
 narrow and rugged Ones, to attain to Salvation.
 What more effectual Means then cou’d the
 Doctor make use of to undermine Christianity,
 by removing the foolish Prejudices of Chri-
 stians, than to blend what they not only confi-
 der as lawful, but as commendable, nay ne-
 cessary, with what they must allow to be vi-
 cious, and consequently condemnable; that is,
Extraordinaries and *Bye-paths* from the high
 Road to Hell, with *New Inventions*?

That he may not altogether offend such of
 his Readers as are tainted with Whims of Chri-
 stian Perfection, he softens the Thing a little

to their prejudiced Ears, by telling them :
 “ Strictly speaking it is impossible to be Righteous over-much : But the Meaning is, be
 “ not excessive in any thing, tho’ the Thing
 “ itself be ever so good: For tho’ the Thing
 “ itself be good, the Excess of it is evil. Thus
 “ for Instance, Alms-giving is very excellent;
 “ but to bestow *so much* upon the Poor, as not
 “ to make *sufficient* Provision for one’s Own
 “ Family, is a great Sin.” That is, Alms-giving, while it is not *extraordinary*, nor extended to more than we are at a Loss to know what to do with, is excellent, very excellent; but when it exceeds the ordinary, and strikes into *Bye-paths* of giving more than Custom makes necessary, ’tis a Sin, a GREAT SIN: ———
 a crying Sin, he would have said, I fancy : For I dare say the Doctor wou’d tremble at the Thought of every superfluous Farthing lavish’d on the Poor, which might hinder him from *so much* towards his *sufficient* Provision for his own Family. But he is here talking to nice-ear’d Christians, and therefore must not make use of Expressions to startle them. If a Christian had been to express himself, his foolish Scruples wou’d have led him to say, *necessary* Provision; but the Doctor, whose Business is to destroy the *foolish Over-righteousness* of Christian Perfection, thought it more proper to make use of the Term, *sufficient*, which no Man has limited to any Degree. So that if a Man does not think Ten thousand Pounds a Year a *sufficient* Provision for his own Family,

it may be a crying Sin in him to give *so much* (that is any thing,) to *the Poor*: Since every little hinders him from leaving twenty thousand Pounds a Year, which is the least, perhaps, that is thought *sufficient* by some Men. Thus you see how feelingly the Doctor speaks against Perfection, or Excess of Alms-giving: For tho' his Complaisance induces him to humour a little the weak Side of Christians, by acknowledging Alms-giving to be excellent, for Argument's Sake; yet it is plain that his principal Purpose is to overthrow this *Extraordinary*, by shewing them that the least Perfection of it is a GREAT Sin. So, for Argument's Sake too, he allows Pride to be a *great* Sin: The better to bring Christians, by this modest Concession, to give up the *Perfection* of *Humility*, when he convinces them that a little *Pride* is necessary to be mix'd with a little *Humility*, because "an *excessive over-strain'd Humility* is a Fault." Now by an *over-strain'd Humility* he cannot be thought to mean the Affectation only of *Humility*, *That* being the greatest of Pride and Hypocrisy, and allow'd a Crime on all Sides. He can only mean then the *Perfection of Humility*: And this, he says, is a Fault. By which means he very artfully brings the Christians over to the Interests of *Pride*, settles a Union between *That* and *Humility*, and by destroying the Perfection of the *Latter*, establishes the Spirit of the *Former*; there being no Medium between *perfect Humility* and *Humility* mix'd with

with *Pride*. And how cou'd the Doctor level at Christianity more effectually than by dissuading his Readers from the Practice of this *perfect Humility* as a Vice, notwithstanding what *Christ* tells them, that *He who is humbled shall be exalted*. Mat. xxiii. 12? For by giving a little into their Prejudices in favour of Humility, he is the better enabled to remove their Prejudices against *Pride*: And thus not appearing openly an Enemy to the *Extraordinary Doctrines of Christ*, he is the better able to befriend such as act in open Defiance to him. Where, by the bye, I think we cannot sufficiently admire the Doctor's Address.

If it should be said, that it wou'd have been a more generous Way of proceeding, to combat Christianity in an open, undisguised Manner, that the Christians might be in readiness to make the better Defence. I answer that allowing it to be more generous, it is neither so safe, nor so sure a Means of destroying their Principles; and Artifice in War is always allowable. Besides let it, I pray, be consider'd that the Doctor gets his Bread by Christianity, is by Profession one of the Church of *England's* Clergy, a Leader among them, and possess'd of Christian Benefices, which an open Opposition to Christianity wou'd strip him of; and this might hinder him from making a farther *sufficient* Provision for his *own Family*, which according to his Principles wou'd be a GREAT Sin. Why then shou'd he destroy himself by being *sincere over-much*? This wou'd be fall-

ing into the Error, he is labouring to draw Christians out of, and sapping the very Foundation of his own Doctrine. A little Sincerity where it suits one's Convenience and Interest, is *good and righteous*; but if it shou'd obstruct an additional Benefice, stand in the Way of a good fat Bishopric, or any way hinder one from making a *sufficient* (that is, if you please to have it so, an *opulent*) Provision for one's own Family, it is a GREAT Sin, it is being *righteous overmuch*. And *why shou'd a Man destroy himself?*

Where there is no Danger of being *righteous overmuch*, that is of *destroying ourselves* in the Favour of our Neighbours, by being *more righteous* than they are; the Doctor thinks the Practice even of all Christian Virtues may be tolerated. But will any one presume to conclude hence that the Doctor is therefore Christianly affected? Pretty Reasoning indeed! Because a Man is complaisant enough to comply with and wink at the Foibles of his weak Neighbours, for the Sake of winning them by Degrees to his own Sentiment, must he therefore be said to give into them? No. " The
 " Doctor indeed winks at their going to
 " Church upon ordinary Days, when their Bu-
 " siness will permit them; that is, in plain
 " *English*, when they have nothing else to do;
 " and upon *Sundays*, from the Beginning to
 " the End of Service, nay at home he allows
 " them to employ a good PART of the Re-
 " mainder of the Day in Reading, Meditation,
 " and

“ and Praying.” But what then? Is he the less averse to Christianity for that? Not at all. The Doctor, like a wise Man, is willing to become *All* to *All*, to gain *All*, to mimick the Apostles, who in the Infancy of Christianity, wink’d at Circumcision in Those who were prejudiced towards it, in order to gain them the more easily over to renounce their Prejudice. The Christians are still weak enough to hold that obsolete Law in Veneration: *Remember Thou keep holy the Sabbath Day*. And had the Doctor openly attack’d this Favourite Observance, he knew he must expect to be rejected in every Thing he had to offer against it. He was sensible of having to deal with tender Stomachs, and therefore must feed them with Milk first, to prepare them for Food of a harder Digestion; he tells them then that it is no great harm to “ employ a *good Part* of the “ Day (the *Sunday*) in Reading, Meditation, “ and Praying, partly in private, partly with “ their Families:” So far he suckles them like Children to bring them into Temper: But when he thinks he has disposed them for more convenient Doctrine, he tells them that “ it is “ not necessary they shou’d so employ all the “ *Sunday*.” Nay “ whatever religious Exercise goes beyond this (a good Part of the “ Lord’s Day) he thinks, better let alone.” Now what is this but complying with the Weakness of Christians in keeping holy *Part* of the *Sabbath Day*, only to entice them by Degrees to break the whole Commandment, which
indis-

indiscriminately extends itself to the whole *Sabbath Day* and every Part of it. *Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.* A Man then must not be *Compos*, who shou'd gather hence that our Author is Christianly affected.

As I love to be sincere, I must own I was once going to give the Doctor up for lost. When I came to the Place where he inveighs against "*Laymen for reading Prayers to any Assembly, except their own Family; and encroaching upon the Office of those who are ordain'd to holy Functions, thro' fear of its taking off from the Reverence and Respect due to them;*" I began to apprehend he was tainted with Christianity. But upon second Thoughts, I consider'd his Profession, and reflected that it wou'd be *Over-righteousness* in him to bear with any one's stealing his Trade from him, since that might hinder his making a SUFFICIENT Provision for his *own Family*: And every Man to his Trade. *Why should the Doctor destroy himself?*

While I was dwelling upon this Argument, and admiring the Ingenuity of our Author in defending the Offices of his Function from the Encroachments of the Laity, only to put his Readers in Mind, that, according to Protestant Principles, every Layman has an equal Right with himself to the Exercise of that Function; I was at a Loss to account for his Motive in awaking his Readers to a Truth which might hinder him (if attended to) from making a farther SUFFICIENT Provision for his *own Family*.

mily. But at length I reflected that, as the Church of *England* was the Branch of Christianity, he was the most suspected to lean towards, he was in the right to shew his Aversion to her Superstitions, by covertly sneering at her Practice. And tho', if her Enemies shou'd take the Hint, and attempt to divest her of her Badges of Popery; it must prove a Hindrance to All in general of his Cloth from making SUFFICIENT Provision for their *own Families*: Yet as it wou'd require some Time to bring this Work to bear, and a longer Time than the Doctor is like to live, he wou'd not feel the ill Consequence of the Mischief of his own hatching: and therefore cannot be said to act contrary to his own Principles, by *destroying himself*. Thus it appears how closely the Doctor sticks to his Text in being no where *Righteous over-much*.

I was going on with what the Doctor immediately adds, "*for unletter'd Laics to take up-*" on them to *expound* or *interpret* the Scriptures, is neither laudable, nor justifiable; it tends to the Confirmation, not the Removal of Ignorance; and lays a Temptation in their Way to *think more highly of themselves than they ought to think*:" And must own, I saw nothing in these Words to offend me; they seem'd perfectly of a Piece, with his preceeding Animadversion. But a Friend of mine, a bigotted Christian of the Church of *England* was startled at them; and desired to read them himself as if he doubted

doubted of my reading them right. He had no sooner read them, than, throwing the Book on the Floor in a Passion, This, said he, is down-right, rank Popery. What can the Papists say more than that, *for the unletter'd Laity to expound the Scripture, tends to the Confirmation of Ignorance.* Is not the Church of England's Authority built upon the private Interpretation of Scripture? And does she not justify (in her xxth Article of Faith) our rejecting any of her Doctrines which we do not find conform to Scripture according to our Interpretation of it? What then can the Man mean by thus barefacedly contradicting her Doctrine here? I cou'd easily have answer'd him: her Subversion. But I found he was startled, and therefore was afraid of thwarting the Doctor's good Intention; by laying it too open then; and nothing shou'd induce me now to do it, but the Desire of shewing him innocent of the Christianity laid to his Charge. But it is time to examine what the Doctor understands by those Words of his Text *being over-wise: neither make thyself over-wise.*

He explains them then by Context, *be not wise in thine own Eyes, or in thine own Conceit.* The Christians will have it that the same Interpretation is alike applicable to both the first Branches of his Text, and therefore think that the preceding Words in this Text, *be not Righteous over-much* shou'd be interpreted, *be not Righteous in thine own Eyes,*

Eyes; or in thine own Conceit. And probably the Doctor is of the same Mind: But then this Interpretation of *Righteous over-much* wou'd not have been useful against Christianity, and therefore it was necessary for him to have Recourse to Invention to explain the real Meaning away, to give place to one which wou'd better suit his laudable Purpose: However where the natural Sense of the Text will bear giving a ridiculous Turn to the Practice of Christian Perfection, the Doctor is fair enough to apply it. Now it seems that your Persons, who are *Righteous over-much*, that is, Sticklers for *Christian Perfection*, must necessarily be *wise in their own Conceits*, and consequently real Fools: which is a knock-down Argument, and a pretty Way enough to laugh them out of what neither Fear nor Hope can prevail with them to give up.

But the Manner of his carrying on the Ridicule is really Master like. “ Do not ignorant People, says he, presume to *expound the Scriptures?* Which can never be done as it shou'd be, but by Persons skill'd in Languages, History, and Antiquity, and such as have made Learning their Study and Profession. Suppose another, tho' in holy Orders, yet a raw Novice (mark the pretty Joke upon the Church of *England* conferring holy Orders on raw Novices) very lately initiated into them, shall, upon the Principle of being *Righteous over-much* take upon

“ him, at his first setting out, to execute as
 “ it were the Office of an Apostle, to be a
 “ Teacher, not only of all the Laity, but of
 “ the learned Clergy, many of them learned
 “ before he was born — what is this but
 “ an outrage upon common Decency and
 “ common Sense; the Height of Presumpti-
 “ on, Confidence, and Self-sufficiency, so ri-
 “ diculous as to create the greatest Laughter,
 “ were it not so deplorable and detestable as to
 “ create the greatest Grief and Abhorrence?”

Here my Friend made me smile, by his fall-
 ing again into Passion. Why surely, said he,
 the Man is mad. Not so mad as you imagine,
 said I. Nay, replies he, I insist upon it, no-
 thing but Madness cou'd make a Parson of the
 Church of *England* talk in this Manner. If
 there was any Weight in what he says, wou'd
 it not give the greatest handle to Papists a-
 gainst the establish'd Church? Might not the
 Priests have turn'd the same Ridicule upon our
 blessed Reformers, many of whom were raw
 Novices and unletter'd Laymen; who yet un-
 dertook to *teach their Teachers and the learned*
Clergy of the Church of Rome, many of whom
were learned before they were born. I cou'd
 have answer'd him that the Doctor's Aim did
 not seem so much level'd to favour Papists,
 as to destroy Christianity in general: But I
 found he was hot and not disposed to hear
 Reason. So I proceeded with the Doctor to
 his second Point.

II. In his second Point the Doctor undertakes to shew the extreme *Folly* and *Weakness* of being *Righteous over-much*, and *over-wise*; and it's Contrariety to sound Reason, and true Religion. Why shouldst thou become stupid, and foolish?

And here he lays about him like a down right Hero, knocking down one Text of Scripture with another; till he has quite spread the Field of Battle with the Carcases of the Slain. Methinks, when I behold him triumphant in this Slaughter of Scripture, the Gospel in one hand, the Epistles of *St. Paul* in the other, which with uncommon Dexterity he dashes against one another, I see that ancient Glory of *England*, the *London 'Prentice*, still immortal on British Sign-posts, with his hands in the Throats of two Lions at once, to pluck out their Tongues. Oh may this second *London Worth*y outshine the Former, and henceforth be immortalised in this reverend Posture over every Ale-house and Tavern; to remind those weak Christians, who still remain bigotted to *Sobriety*, that *He*, whom They (and with them the Doctor, out of Complaisance,) call "our blessed Saviour, *came eating and*
drinking, was present at Weddings, Feasts
 "and Entertainments; nay at one of them
 "work'd a Miracle to make Wine, when it
 "is plain there had been more drank than
 "was absolutely necessary for the Support of
 "Nature, (and therefore at least enough) and

“ consequently something (more than enough)
 “ had been indulged to Pleasure and Chear-
 “ fulness when the miraculous Wine was
 “ drank!” And therefore if *Christ*, whom
 they pretend to follow, wrought a Miracle
 in behalf of Excess in drinking for the Sake
 of Pleasure and Chearfulness, let them as
 often as they behold the *reverend Sign*, fol-
 low the Path it points them out, and not pre-
 tend to make a Duty of *extraordinary* Sobri-
 ety and Temperance, when it is plain from
 the Doctor’s Interpretation of Scripture, that
 it is a great *Folly* and *Weakness* and contrary
 to Scripture, and consequently to sound Rea-
 son and true Religion. But let us return to
 the Doctor.

It is really beautiful to observe how he
 behaves in this Engagement. Like an expe-
 rienced Commander he suffers not his Cou-
 rage to get the better of his Prudence. He
 knows that the Christians, for whose Con-
 version he is combating Christianity, wou’d
 be alarm’d if he openly disclaim’d Christian
 Perfection, and therefore to cover his main
 Design, he endeavours to give them a diffe-
 rent Idea of that Perfection from that which
 they had before. They are foolish enough to
 believe Christ who tells them, *to seek first*
the Kingdom of Heaven, and that it will a-
 vail a Man nothing *to gain the whole World*
if he loses his own Soul; and thence are so
 weak to conclude that even the *most lawful*
and allow’d Concerns, if not directed to Sal-
 vation,

vation, render Men unable to enter and unworthy to be received into the true State of Christianity. And that the Wisdom from above condemns all Labour as equally fruitless, except that which labours after Life everlasting. That is in a Word, they condemn all Trades and Professions all Business and secular Concerns, which have not Heaven for their chief End and Motive. So that 'tis with them a Sin to be rich, unless Riches be made use of to lay up better Treasures in Heaven: Going to Law, even on the defensive Side, without the Motive of sanctifying Justice, is unlawful: Gaiety or Expensiveness without an Intention superior to that of Vanity is Pride, and therefore a Crime: No Sort of Recreation or Diversion, which is not season'd with some Religious View, can be strictly Christian: The bodily Appetites, and worldly Enjoyments must be renounced as well in Practice as at the Font of Baptism: and to be entitled to eternal Felicity, every Christian must be in an habitual Disposition and struggle to attain to such a Self-denial as to *know nothing but JESUS CHRIST and him crucify'd*. But to prove the Folly and Weakness of this, the Doctor appeals to common Sense, that is to the Senses of the Common of Mankind, whom he is very sure to have on his Side. And can what is inconsistent with, or opposite to, the common Sense of Men, be consistent with Christianity, when Christians (at least it is to be fear'd so) are the greater Part
of

of those Men, in this Nation? There is a cutting Stroke for you, Christians! But what will you say to the Doctor's next Argument? "Does not the Apostle Rom. xii. 1. bid us "present our *Bodies* to God; but you talk as "if we had no Bodies at all." If you reply that the Apostle adds what the Doctor has wisely left out: Present your Bodies to God *a living SACRIFICE, holy and acceptable to Him*, and in the next Verse *be not conform'd to this World*; and in the next Chap. v. 24. *make not Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*. The Doctor will answer that the Apostle over shot himself, was *Righteous over-much*, and talk'd there as if we had no Bodies at all. For in short we might as well have no Bodies at all, as not satisfy their Appetites; and what have we to do with Flesh, if we are not *to fulfil the Lusts thereof*? This is unanswerable to such as have common Sense, or to speak *English, common Feeling*.

The Christians make a mighty Account of their Master's telling them that *whosoever forsakes not all that he has cannot be his Disciple*. And are strangely struck with his rejecting the well-disposed rich Youth, who wou'd not sell his Estate and give it to the Poor. But the Doctor has compromised the Matter very notably by shewing them that *forsaking all* can mean no more, than *being ready to do so* when *our Duty* requires it: which is a very easy thing to come into. For as he has
already

already, in his persuasive Way, demonstrated that it is never *our Duty so to do*, but *Over-righteousness, Folly, Weakness*, and of *dangerous Tendency*, it is an easy Matter to be in Readiness to part with what we know we never shall part with. Wherefore the Meaning of *Christ* cou'd only be, that we shou'd keep all the Riches and Estate we please to think a mere *sufficient* Provision for our *own Family*, and only give to the Poor what we find usefess, and thus we may evade the Inconveniency of *forsaking all* by still keeping all, and *being ready to forsake* it at our Death, when we cannot keep it any longer.

Can Christians be any longer insensible of the *Folly and Weakness* of being *Righteous over-much*? Is it not plain that their Master cou'd not speak in a literal Sense? Tho', if he had, as the Doctor observes, the Christians of these Days are not obliged to mind him: For tho' it was necessary for his primitive Disciples to practise what he taught, in order to establish Christianity; is it so now? Christians in those Days were under Persecution, and not in a Capacity of getting fresh Estates, when they had given those they possess'd to the Poor: Therefore it was a proper Time to give them away. But now they are in a State of Peace, and, when they have given one Estate away, may by their Industry acquire another: And therefore ought not to part with, but hold fast that which they actually possess. This is an Argument in *Barbara*, who can answer it?

But

But Christians forsooth alledge, that their
 “ Saviour commands his Disciples to *take no*
 “ *thought what they shall eat, drink, or wear :*
 “ — *not to labour for the Meat that perish-*
 “ *eth, but for that Meat which endureth unto*
 “ *everlasting Life :* — *Lay not up for your-*
 “ *selves Treasures on Earth, but Treasures in*
 “ *Heaven :* — *to turn one Cheek, when the*
 “ *other is smitten :* — *to give the Cloak,*
 “ *when the Coat is demanded, &c.* But the
 Doctor shews them the *Folly* and *Weakness*
 of this, 'by acquainting them that *Christ* was
 not in earnest. For (and the Doctor's Affir-
 mations are all Demonstrations) he only talk'd
 for Talking's Sake, and therefore made use of
 Proverbs; and Proverbs quite different from all
 other Proverbs, which are ever laid down as
 Rules of Practice: Whereas he never meant
 they shou'd practise them. Nay he only meant
 them as so many *Hyperboles* or Rhetorical Fi-
 gures, the Nature of which is to contain a
 great deal more than what is true, as the Ety-
 mology of the Word imports. And if Chri-
 stians shou'd insist that their Master must have
 some Meaning in making use of these Figures,
 this Answer may satisfy them, that he meant
 only “ to prohibit Revenge, and Litigiousness,
 “ and to command Patience in Injuries, in les-
 “ ser Matters (that is Trifles) when they are
 “ in any tolerable Degree, according to the
 “ Dictates of sober Reason, Prudence, and
 “ Equity.” That is to speak the Doctor's
 Meaning plainly. When the Injury done us
 is

is a Trifle, and sober Reason, Prudence, and Equity tell us that it is tolerable; we are to bear it with Patience, and not be litigious. But when the Injury is considerable; or even trivial, if our Passions prevailing over Reason, Prudence, and Equity, represent it as intolerable and grievous; why then we must give way to Revenge and Litigiousness; otherwise we shall be *Righteous over-much*, which is a GREAT Sin. And whatever *Christ* may say to the contrary, cannot be in earnest, but must be *hyperbolical*, that is, contain a great deal more than what is true.

The Bigots to Christianity may think perhaps to come off by "saying, that *He suffi-*
" ently selleth all, who parteth with the Self-
" Enjoyment of it, and maketh it the Support
" of those that want it." But how prettily does the Doctor ridicule this Evasion! "It
 " seems then at last (says he) that by *selling*
 " all is meant, *not selling* all; but not enjoy-
 " ing any thing, and supporting the Poor." Some of the Doctor's Friends are weak enough to be ashamed of this little Witticism; because, forsooth they think there is no Room for it, and that SELLING THE FRUITS OF ALL, and making it the Support of those who want it, is strictly and properly SELLING ALL, and giving it to the Poor. But I think a little Escape of this Sort now and then may be excused in so solid a Divine, who does not often make a Profession of Wit. But to return from this short

Digression, the Doctor proves that this Evasion is not true: Demonstrating, according to his usual Manner, by Assertion, that Luxury and Covetousness are all that is forbidden. He allows indeed, to humour the Christians, that the *Vanities* and *Pomps* of the World are to be renounced; but then to set them right again, he tells them how they are to renounce them: That is, “ so as not to follow them, or be led “ (*by the Nose*) by them — Christians not only may, but must admit of *Pomps* — And “ all Christians must have to do with some “ *Vanities*; or else *they must needs go out of “ the World* indeed; for the World itself is all “ over *Vanity*.” Now what greater Proof can be expected of the Doctor’s sincere Intentions against Christianity? Vanity is contrary and destructive to the *Humility*, at least to the Perfection of it, which *Christ* teaches. For *Christ* will have all his Followers aim at the greatest Perfection in every Virtue: *Be ye perfect even as your Father, who is in Heaven, is perfect.* Matt. v. 48. whereas the Doctor proves, in his Way, that *Christ* cou’d mean no such Thing, consequently that it is the utmost *Folly* and Weakness to mind him. But I think I have so fully clear’d the Doctor in this Point, that I shall proceed to the Third, in which as well as in the last he has very little Occasion of my Assistance to prove his Innocence of the Censure of Christianity. His third Point then is

III. *The*

III. *The dangerous Tendency and pernicious Consequences of being Righteous over-much. Why shouldst Thou destroy thyself?*

The Doctor has been frequently envied by Friends, as well as Enemies, the sonorous Strength of his Lungs, but in these two Points he seems to envy himself the Happiness of a long Breath. There is something very pretty in the whimsical Tediousness of the Doctor, here. In his former two Points he was as busy amidst the united Powers of Scripture and Christianity, as *Sampson* amidst the *Philistines*: But now he has gain'd a compleat Victory, he enjoys his Triumph over them with all the frisky Leisure of a Cat over a Mouse; he catches them, lets 'em escape, then gives them a Pat, then lets them run away for good, merely for the Pleasure of running after them. And yet prodigious! He is at the very same Time as serious as *Don Quixote* himself, when he raised an embattled Flock of Sheep into an Army, with the sole View of gratifying his glorious Ambition to engage with them. Oh that some Faith-defying Barber might, without being *Righteous over-much*, give up the *Self-Enjoyment* of his Bason! How well wou'd it become the reverend Head of an anti-christian Parson! But let us proceed to consider the Doctor's Dexterity in some few Instances.

To shew then what infinite Mischief the *Extraordinaries*, or *Excesses*, or *Perfection* of *Christianity* does to Religion, and the Souls of Men, (that is to their Desire of serving God as far as, and no farther than it suits their Pleasure and Convenience) our Author judiciously observes: *First*, “ That it dejects and perplexes
 “ Persons *thus* truly religious, making them
 “ think they do not their Duty, when they
 “ really do;” That is in short, their Conscience tells them they shou’d *sell all*, tho’ the Doctor insists they shou’d *keep all*. *Secondly*,
 “ It hardens the Wicked; making them ex-
 “ plode the Christian Religion, as being im-
 “ practicable.” Whereas nothing is more practicable than to be ready to part with all, when we are once assured it will never be required of us, as our Author has made it out, in as plain a Manner as ever he did any Argument in his Life. I cannot help therefore being of the Doctor’s Opinion, that your “ *Righteous over-
 “ much and over-wise, give great Occasion to
 “ the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme: They
 “ bring up an evil Report upon the true ge-
 “ nuine Christianity.*” For they impute *Perfection* to it, whereas the Doctor in his two first Points has fully demonstrated that its Beauty consists in being very imperfect. Besides your Followers of *Christ* in these *Extraordinaries*, or *Perfections*, “ give Encourage-
 “ ment to Those who are vicious in the other
 “ Extreme, to the Lewd and Debauch’d, the
 “ Irreligious and Profane.” And how do they
 do

do this? Why “ when they see the *highest*
 “ *Professors* of Religion teaching such absurd
 “ *Doctrines, (as of abstaining from every the*
 “ *minute Vice or Vanity, and cultivating e-*
 “ *very Virtue to the height of its Perfection)*
 “ and even seconding (that is shewing practi-
 “ cable) such *Doctrines* with Practices; they
 “ flatter themselves that Religion itself is an
 “ absurd Thing, and that there is no Truth
 “ or solid Reason in it.” The Meaning of
 the Doctor in short appears very plain. Your
 Christians by professing Perfection of Virtue
 (which is a monstrous *Extraordinary* with the
Vicious) and having the Assurance to confirm
 that Doctrine by Practice, give great Offence
 to Lovers of Vice. For they shew that Reli-
 gion is absurd enough to teach Doctrines which
 may, must, and can be practically observed:
 And therefore cannot have Truth or Reason in
 them. Whereas wou’d they teach one Thing
 and practise another, Religion might be
 thought impracticable, and therefore by ex-
 cusing the Owners of it from attempting to
 put it in practice, wou’d not be absurd but
 full of Truth and Reason. “ *Why* therefore
 “ (to make Use of the Doctor’s Words)
 “ *shoud’st thou destroy thyself, Thou Christian*
 “ *Righteous over-much*, by destroying others,
 “ in casting so much Scandal, and Reproach
 “ upon Religion,” as Thou dost in shewing it
 burdensome by being practicable? when no
 one wou’d be frighted from professing it, but
 for

for fear of being expected to put it in practice.

But the Doctor has a heavier Charge against the Christian Perfectionists than any hitherto proposed. “ They set the nearest and dearest “ Relations at Variance; disturb the Quiet of “ Families; nay throw whole Parishes into “ Confusion.” Now this is plain Matter of Fact, which is daily seen: A Christian has a very plentiful Estate, for Example, doubly and trebly more than sufficient to maintain his Family in their Station. What then? The Question is, whether they think it *sufficient* or no. Now if his Relations shou’d think it *not sufficient*, or at least *not more than sufficient*, and yet this Christian, thro’ Bigottry to Perfection, shou’d take it into his Head to sell that which he thinks superabundant, and they think not more than *sufficient* (which is a daily tho’ not universal Case) must it not occasion Misunderstanding in Families? Suppose a Divine weak enough to believe and practise the Doctrines of *Christ*, shou’d take upon him to preach Christianity and Christian Perfection in the Doctor’s Parish, which perhaps is perfectly quiet about the Matter, wou’d it not throw the whole Neighbourhood and Parish, in all probability into Confusion? And of what ill *Tendency* such Confusion must be, is needless to hint.

After this the Doctor enters into a private Engagement with one Set of Christians in particular, in which it is quite foreign to my Purpose

Purpose to follow him. Let it suffice that I have clear'd him from the unjust Imputation of being a Christian, in his general Principles as laid down in the Pamphlet in Question. If in his private Skirmishes he plays one Sect upon another; that cannot prove him to be of any, as long as his main Drift seems to be the Subversion of Christianity in the whole, by the weakening it in its several Parts.

A Parson indeed wou'd fain have wrested the following Expression of the Doctor, to prove Christianity upon him. "The *Church* itself, as a regular well order'd Society, is "by these irregular upstart *Societies*, even by "the *best* of them, and much more by the "*worst*, greatly weaken'd and impair'd." Do not you see, says the Parson, that the Doctor owns a *Church*, now who but Christians make use of that Term? And what will you make of all this, said I, to the Gowns-man? It is plain he acknowledges a *Church* only for the Sake of hinting, that it is *weaken'd* and *im-pair'd*; the Consequence of which is, that either it wants repairing, or is past it: And surely the Conclusion to be drawn from either can be no ways favourable to the Reputation of any Church that lays claim to Christianity. But the Doctor (says my Friend the Parson) throws all the Odium upon those *Upstarts* the *Methodists*, and such as they are. No Matter, said I, who be to blame, the Inconvenience and Danger of belonging to a *Church* or *Society* out of Repair is still the same. Which

is

is so true, that a Quaker is said to have assign'd this once as a Reason for interesting himself in an Election against the High Church in favour of the Low Party. That Church, as thou callest it, Friend (quoeth the Quaker) is always in so much Danger, and the Teachers of it express their Fear for it so warmly on every Occasion, that I am afraid of having any thing to do with so tottering an Edifice. The Quaker was very much in the Right of it, says a Papist who was in company with the Parson and me, and so I think is the Doctor too. It is an excellent Rub he gives to the Church of *England*, to tell us she is out of repair. But then the *upstart Society* wipes her off still better. What do you mean, Sir, says the Parson in a Passion? Mean, Sir, says the Papist? Why, I mean that the Author of this Pamphlet had a Mind to put us in Mind of the Church of *England's* Date. Pray what do you understand by an upstart Society? I understand a Set of People, says the Parson, whose Establishment is of late Years standing, and whose Rise was obscure. But I defy you to say the Doctor cou'd mean to apply this to the Church of *England*, when it is a plain Case he level'd it at the *Methodists*. You are mistaken, says the Papist, it is as much applicable to the one as the other, with regard to Christianity in general. The Church of *England* had no stronger Lights to establish her by in the Beginning, nor perhaps so strong, as the *Methodists* now have, who do not set out upon
 Blood,

Blood, Rapine, and Sacrilege. And if the Methodists are very modern with Respect to the Church of *England*, This is not of two hundred Years standing, which is much more modern with Respect to Christianity, which has lasted upwards of seventeen hundred Years. So that it is plain from hence, that if the Doctor is inclined to any Christian Church, it must be to ours. To yours? the Doctor a Papist? a Church of *England* Clergyman a Papist? monstrous Paradox!

Not such a Paradox, as you may imagine, says the Papist. He is not the first Divine by many, of the same outward Profession, who has done us eminent Service, by their Writings. At first indeed we suspected him to be an Enemy from certain little peevish fractious Expressions he used to let drop: But they were only a Mask to cover his good Will towards us, as we soon were convinced. For the very Book he undertook to write against us, in defence of the Church of *England*, was of so much Credit and Service to Us, that we have Reason to look upon him as one of our best Missioners in *England*. Nay he has brought us over more Converts than twenty of them have done: And I don't doubt but this very Pamphlet was written with a* Design to do us Service.

Here I cou'd no longer forbear giving a Vent to Laughter. I wou'd have fain shewn them both their Mistakes, and set them right; but they were too hot for me to put in a

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Word.

Word. However I was very well pleased at being able to gather, from the Dissentions of these two Gentlemen, what served to confirm me in my Opinion that the Doctor was innocent from the Aspersions of being a Christian. For I found they were both agreed to be resolute, the Papist in believing that the Doctor was no Protestant, the Parson in holding that he was no Papist. But let us make some Remarks on the Doctors fourth Point.

IV. The fourth Point of the Doctor is an Application of his Doctrine to *others* first, and next to *ourselves*.

By *ourselves* the Doctor means all such as share in common with him the Happiness of not being *Righteous over-much*. They who are so, or are disposed to be so, are *others*. Now to These our Author observes *first*, that “ being *Righteous over-much*, like all other Errors, proceeds from considering only *one Side of Things*, and not taking in the *whole Compass* of an Argument or Subject.” — “ What! says the *Half-Thinker*, — can I “ be too charitable? Can I bestow *too much* “ upon the Poor?” — Yes, answers the Doctor. “ You may bestow *too much* upon “ the Poor, to the Ruin of your Wife and “ Children — *Charity begins at home*.” How do you know whether you can make a SUFFICIENT Provision for your own Family? You have ten thousand Pounds a Year; what then? Your Wife and Children may have
Calls

Calls for twenty Thousand: And thus the giving but a Shilling to a Person in Want, may hinder your making a SUFFICIENT Provision for them: And therefore this is not *Charity*, but *Madness*, and a great and *most grievous Sin*. *Charity begins at home*. And who can fix Bounds to *Sufficiency*, 'till Limits are set to human Desires?

The Doctor's second and third Observations are equally ingenious and smart; but as they are level'd at particular Denominations of Christians, tho' they are supported by little Christian Reflections, I shall take no Pains to prove, that they are no ways derogatory to the antichristian Character our Author writes this Pamphlet in; since I have already shewn, that it is one of his Favourite Stratagems in this Work, to play upon Christianity with Christian Principles, as being the most effectual to his Purpose.

The *fourth* Observation is worthy the great Man that makes it; "It is observable, (*says the Doctor*) that the *Righteous over-much*, "*(whom he very artfully blends with the* "*Enthusiasts and false Spiritualists)* have, in "*all Ages, bated the establish'd Church and* "*Clergy — which I think is very much* "*to the Honour of the establish'd Church* "*and Clergy."* No one who has any Sense, and has read the pretty smart Reflections he has before made, will take this in any other Sense, than a little wheedling Compliment the Doctor is forced to make use of to a Peo-

ple he has a Dependence upon for a *sufficient* Provision for his *own* Family, and whom notwithstanding he has been more smart upon than upon any other Set of Christians. This puts me in mind of a little arch Rogue I saw t'other Day in the Streets, who, while two Boys of his Companions were boxing, artfully threw a handful of Dirt in the Eyes of his School-fellow, and then kept striking him in the Face and clapping him on the Back, at the same time, with a well done, *Jack!* Well done, *Jack!*

The Reason however which the Doctor assigns for this Inveteracy against the establish'd Church and Clergy is, "that the *establish'd Church* is the *Fortress*, the *strong Hold* of the *Christian Religion*; and the *Clergy* the *Garrison*, or *Soldiers* that *defend it*." Now as he has already inform'd us that this strongest *Hold of Christian Religion* is *very much out of Repair*, and the *Garrison* made out of a Parcel of *Raw Novices*, what else can he mean to insinuate to us, but that Christianity is in so tottering a Condition, that those who stand by it are likely to be crush'd by its Ruins, or else must be quickly obliged to desert it: And consequently that it is an *excessive Folly*, *Sin*, and *Danger* to persist in its Defence any longer, by *being over Righteous*. *Why shou'dst Thou destroy thy self?*

And now, I think, I have, to the Satisfaction of every reasonable Judge, clear'd this great Man from the *false Imputation* of being a
Christian,

Christian, notwithstanding what any one may pretend to gather from the ingenious Pamphlet in question. And tho' some weak Persons might be apt to mistake his Application to *ourselves*, that it is to such as are like him not liable to being *Righteous over-much*, for a Disposition to Christianity; I think it no ways necessary to add any thing in his Defence. Let but the Profession be consider'd by which the Doctor is to make a SUFFICIENT Provision for his *own* Family, and every one must see the Necessity he is under of complying a little with the Weaknesses of those prejudic'd Persons he has to deal with. *Why shou'd he destroy himself, by being over-Righteous, or over-sincere?*

If any one shou'd object, that the Doctor's Inveteracy against Christian Perfection, does not sufficiently prove him equally avers'd to Christianity itself; and therefore as I have proved only that the Doctor's Sermon has only overthrown the former, I have not compleatly vindicated him from the latter. I answer, that tho' a Man may be a good Christian without being actually a perfect Christian; yet he cannot be the one actually, without desiring and labouring to be the other: For Christianity essentially consists in an habitual Thirst after, and Tendency to, Perfection. So that the Doctor destroying this habitual Struggle and Pursuit of Christian Perfection, effectually destroys Christianity, since nothing can subsist without what is essential to it. *Be perfect,*
says

says *Christ*, as your heavenly Father is perfect: — Be not over-righteous, says the Doctor. Sell all you have and give it to the Poor, says *Christ*: 'Tis Folly, Weakness, Madness, Sin, and Danger, says the Doctor. If any Man take away thy Coat give him thy Cloak also, says *Christ*: 'Tis Hyperbolical, says the Doctor, and means more than is true. Thus opposite are the Maxims of this learned Author to those of Christianity.

True indeed it is, that Christians themselves do not look upon these Words of *Christ*, as Precepts which oblige us to a perpetual Practice of them: But as Advices which we are obliged to aspire to as far as our Station will permit. And the Practice of them (according to Christians) is so far from being a Subject of Derision in any, that it is highly commendable and desirable in all, and even obligatory to such as cannot avoid a positive Offence against God without it. So that if a Man, for Example, has been robb'd of one half his Estate, and cannot retrieve it without suborning false Witnesses to swear for him (though they shou'd happen to swear what is just) he must rather part with the other half, than go to Law (for what he has lost) in an unlawful Manner. Yet the Doctor without any Restrictions says, and seems ready to swear, that *Christ* speaks Hyperbolically, that is, more than is true.

Upon the whole then it appears from what I have here said, that the Doctor's main Design in this Pamphlet must be to sap the very
Founda-

Foundation of Christianity, and that the little Concessions he has been pleased to make which seem to savour of a Christian, were only intended as Dust for the Eyes of Those he meant to convert from the *Folly, Sin, and Danger* of Christian Perfection, or being *Righteous over-much*. Why then, oh Christian, shou'd you flatter yourself, that the Doctor will keep you in Countenance? Forbear for the future to asperse him: And following his Advice and Example, *be not Righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldst Thou destroy Thyself?*

F I N I S.

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